

Fire Department Discussion on Proposed Southfield Legislation
Meeting, January 27, 2014
Town Hall, Mayor's Office
75 Middle Street, Weymouth, MA 02189
6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Sue Kay; George Lane; Mike Gallagher; Michael Smart; Patrick O'Connor; Bob Conlon; Ken DiFazio; Jane Hackett; Chief Stark; Jeff Wall; Jonathan Tose; Paul Hammond; Richard Chase; Richard Ramponi; John Haslam; Justin Myers

The Meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Mayor Kay.

The Mayor explained her intention to hold informational meetings with various Town departments to discuss impacts of the proposed Southfield Legislation. The meetings will provide an overview and be informational and will include discussion, suggestions, questions and answers.

Chief Stark introduced his staff and the importance of a "team" approach for the Weymouth Fire Department. In attendance were: Deputy Tose, Deputy Haslam, Deputy Chase, Deputy Hammond, Union President Ramponi, Fire Prevention Myers.

Chief Stark reviewed the attached PowerPoint presentation. The following points were made and discussion ensued:

- *In 2013 the Weymouth Fire Department responded 73 times to calls at Southfield, requiring 117 apparatus responses.*
- *An emergency response consists of, but is not limited to, any of the following: Emergency Medical Response; problem with water; carbon monoxide detector; auto/house lock-out; fires; auto accidents, etc.*
- *RIT stands for Rapid Intervention Team (refers to page 2 of presentation)*
- *Ladder and Engine Companies are cross trained*
- *Ladder 2 is a 100 ft. ladder (4 stories); Ladder 5 is a 75 ft. ladder (back-up)*
- *Pre 1990 NAS (Southfield) had a separate 48 member Federal Fire Dept. that provided Mutual Aid to Weymouth Fire Department; eventually they donated some equipment to the Town;*
- *Two current members of the WFD were on the NAS Federal Fire Department.*
- *Southfield design is very "city" like with alleyways and close proximities, posing a challenge for fighting fires, etc.*

Mr. Wall explained in 1997, at the time of the BASE closure, former Fire Chief Madden negotiated with the Navy a sliding scale to cover salaries. Sixteen (16) firefighters were hired to keep the station open at the BASE. That lasted approximately 4 ½ years, then Weymouth took over. Eventually, due to budget cuts, that station closed.

It was noted that since 1996, there has been a 69% increase in service calls, and a 26% decrease in uniformed members of the department.

ISO ratings are based on Response Times. Response times are how fast people and equipment arrive on scene to mitigate a problem. The first apparatus should arrive on scene within 4 minutes!

Chief Stark provided a quick review of a response timeline (refer to page 4 of the presentation). Deputies provide quarterly reports on response times for the WFD that are sent to the State. Chief also included, response time in minutes, a study from FEMA that reported a minute and a ½ could be the difference between a fire being confined to the room of origin, and losing the entire building (refer to page 5 of the presentation)!

At the inquiry of Councilor Conlon, it was confirmed that WFD does have a spare engine and ladder. Also, that Mutual Aid automatically comes if there is a “working” fire in Weymouth, otherwise the Deputy in command makes the call. In turn, Weymouth provides Mutual Aid to our surrounding communities.

Google Maps shows from Station 5 to 200 Trotter Road, it is 2.7 miles, and would take 8 minutes to get there!

Chief reviewed the information below regarding residential units, population and square miles:

Weymouth

- 23,480 residential units
- 53,743 population (2010 census)
- 17.5 square miles

Southfield

- 2855 residential units
- 5,000-15,000 estimated population
- 2.3 square miles

In the fall of 2012, former Fire Chief Macurtin was asked to do a study to provide recommendations on future fire protection at Southfield. The following is the result of that study:

- Immediate hiring of a Fire Inspector
- Purchase and staffing of a new engine in FY13
- Design & build of a new fire station in FY15
- None of theses have happened to date!
- Will it happen if the legislation passes?

The following are other areas of the WFD that will immediately be impacted by the Legislation:

- *Fire Prevention services*
- *Fire Protection at Southfield*
- *Existing vacant properties (approximately 100)*
- *Existing South Weymouth residents*

Solicitor Lane inquired as to whether the department will have to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the narrow passageways at Southfield. The Chief responded that he has many SOP's that he needs to address including bomb threats, vacant buildings, and narrow passageways. The WFD is aware of the design characteristics of Southfield and realizes how this will affect fire-fighting tactics.

Mayor Kay referred to correspondence she had seen indicating that South Shore Tri-Town Development Corporation (SSTTDC) asked Starwood to address the vacant buildings on the property. Chief stated that LNR previously boarded up the vacant buildings as requested, and addressed some infrastructure issues with the hydrants, however, some hydrants are too old and too dilapidated to repair.

There was a brief discussion on the updates and replacement of existing hydrants on the Southfield property. LNR maintained existing working hydrants and installed one new hydrant along Shea Memorial Blvd to have a hydrant every 750 feet. Well below Weymouth's standards of every 300 feet.

Chief Stark identified the following as needs of his department at full build out, in order to improve response times, keeping the safety of Weymouth residents, Southfield residents and firefighters in mind:

- *Additional Fire Station*
- *Additional Fire Engine*
- *Additional Ladder*
- *Additional Forest Truck*
- *Hire 33 Additional Personnel*

At the request of Mayor Kay, Chief Stark explained there is a formula for determining additional personnel when an apparatus is put in service, that includes the following:

- *Engine- Hire 4 men +1, or 5; need 4 groups, for a total of 20*
- *Ladder Truck-10*
- *1 Executive Officer*
- *1 EMS Coordinator*
- *1 Inspector*

Mr. Gallagher inquired about the current residential sprinkler building regulations at Southfield, and asked how they affect response times.

Justin Myers responded that the residential sprinklers are currently driven through an appeals process through the BZA and attached to the zoning regulations. They are currently stricken from the Building Code of Massachusetts.

Because of minimal setbacks (less than 6 ft. between the single family homes) at Southfield, it has been agreed that everything will be sprinkled, however it's important to note the residential sprinklers are designed ONLY to allow the safe evacuation of the resident and NOT to put out the fire.

The apartment buildings on Trotter Road are adequately equipped with sprinklers.

Councilor Conlon stressed the need to re-open Station 2 upon passage of the Legislation. Chief Stark responded that it is a concern of the department and the Mayor and they are working on it.

Councilor O'Connor thanked the Chief for his presentation and echoed the many needs of the Weymouth fire department.

Deputy Tose reminded all that simultaneous calls and mutual aid response are major factors in compounding response times. Other local communities share similar concerns. Deputy Tose offered meeting attendees, as did Chief Stark, to contact him and take a ride to Southfield to get a first hand prospective on the previous discussions.

Deputy Haslam commented on a previous statement that a Ladder Company has a lot of responsibility and they are often multi-tasking. He also expressed the importance of response times and stated, "A fire doubles its size every minute!"

Mr. Gallagher inquired, "What is the response time to Thicket Street and also asked if there was an additional fire station at Southfield, would it help response time to Thicket Street?"

Chief Stark shared some thoughts on locations for an additional station in South Weymouth, including Southfield property and said he has prepared solutions to some of the concerns discussed that he can provide, the problem, however, is a funding source.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Savoy